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ABSTRACT

This study examined the effects of the need to achieve, as measured by a behavioral checklist, on reading achievement. Subjects were 96 students enrolled in a southwestern Mississippi school district; 32 students were randomly selected from each of the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades. Each subject was then tested in reading achievement, IQ, and achievement need. The measure of achievement need was found to be relatively independent of measured IQ; as a predictor of reading achievement, it was equal to, or better than, IQ. The achievement checklist and tabular illustrations of data are provided. (Author/KS)

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MEASURING NEED ACHIEVEMENT IN THE ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM[1]

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[1]This study was based on the dissertation completed by the first author at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, Illinois under the direction of the second author.

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ABSTRACT

This study was designed to examine the effects of need achievement, as measured on a n achievement checklist, on reading achievement. The subjects for this study were ninety-six students who were enrolled in a southwestern Mississippi school district. Thirty-two students were randomly selected from each of the fourth, fifth, and sixth grade levels. Each subject was tested in reading achievement, IQ, and need achievement. The DP Linear Computer Program was used to analyze the data. The .05 level of significance was chosen and the proposed hypothesis was accepted as tenable or rejected on the basis of the F-ratio obtained from observed relationships. The measure of n achievement in this study was obtained from a behavior checklist found to be relatively independent of measured IQ and an equal or better predictor of reading achievement than IQ.

MEASURING NEED ACHIEVEMENT IN THE ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM

The possible causes of reading disabilities are numerous, while a single factor seldom causes reading disability. In all but the mildest cases, the difficulty is due to a composite of related conditions (Bond & Tinker, 1967). However, it is noteworthy that most of the research and commentary relative to the problem of reading disability is concerned with such factors as health, language development, intelligence, socioeconomic status, self-concept, and teacher expectations. It is not herein suggested that these are of little value in effecting reading achievement. Rather it is suggested that an important factor which seems to be more important has been given little, if any, attention. This factor is need achievement motivation.

No learning transpires without a motive; an individual must have a need to learn (Zintz, 1970). If appropriate motivation is not present, satisfactory learning will not take place despite mental ability to perform the task (Bijou, 1952). A study in particular which supports this notion advocated by Bijou was done by Brown, Abeles, and Iscoe (1954) who found that the student who shows poor scholarship does not necessarily score lower on psychological tests designed to measure intelligence, but that very often factors of interest and motivation are primary contributors toward this poor achievement.

The empirical studies on the relationship between reading achievement and need achievement are very few in number. However, the studies that were done seem to support the notion that there is a positive correlation between these variables. Schrock and Grossman (1961) concluded that motivation, or the lack of it, is a major factor in reading disabilities. They felt that the child with reading problems tends to have a negative attitude toward learning to read. He is forced to make an effort to learn to read from home and school. In an attempt to meet these demands, he goes through the motions, but subconsciously, he does not participate actively since he believes he lacks any possible

opportunity for success. Healy (1965) found that favorable attitudes produce significant achievement and more reading and Johnston (1974) found a significant correlation between motivation and reading scores for second, third, and fourth grade children.

Finally, the attitude which a student has toward his studies may affect his scholastic performance to a greater degree than his native intelligence, study aids, or study habits (Brown et al., 1954). Also, like or dislike of school seems to be definitely related to the reading ability of the child. Good readers tend to like school, poor readers tend to dislike school (Sheldon & Carrillo, 1952). Hence, it is suggested that if a child has a need for achieving in reading and enjoys school, then he will attend classes regularly and put forth an effort to improve in reading achievement.

The relationship between n achievement and reading achievement seems to exist. However, the use of published indices such as the TAT or Edward's inventory make assessment for classroom use quite cumbersome. This study utilyzed a behavioral checklist which is completed by the teacher and is based on the McClelland-Atkinson construct of motivation. (See Table 1.) The aim of this study was, then, to assess the relationship between n achievement, as measured by the checklist, and reading achievement.

(Insert Table 1 about here)

Instrumentation

There were three variables under consideration in the study. The following instruments were used to measure these variables:

The California Reading Test, Levels 3, 4, and 5 of the 1970 edition, was used to measure reading achievement.

The Otis-Lennon Mental Abilities Test was used to measure the estimated IQ.

The N Achievement Checklist, which was constructed by the investigator, was used to measure need achievement. The checklist consisted of 20 questions for the classroom teacher to answer

concerning the student in terms of whether or not the student possessed a certain behavior trait typical of a person with a high need achievement motive. These behaviors were defined according to McClelland's (1953) theory of need achievement.

Procedures

Ninety-six students were randomly selected from the fourth, fifth, and sixth grade student population. All of the students were assessed in the following areas: intelligence, need achievement, and reading achievement.

The DP Linear Computer Program was used to analyze the data. The .05 significance level was chosen and the proposed hypothesis was accepted as tenable or rejected on the basis of F-ratios obtained from observed relationships.

To test the stated problem presented, the following hypothesis was generated and tested:

There is a positive correlation between need achievement and reading achievement. Hence, the study with a high level of need achievement tends to be a better reader than a student with a low need achievement level.

Results

A summary of the means and standard deviations of each test is reported in Table 2. As noted in the table: (a) For levels 3, 4, and 5 of the reading test which was designed for grades 4, 5, and 6, the mean scores for each grade level were well below grade level, (b) In a possible range of scores from zero to 20 on the need achievement checklist, the mean scores for fourth and sixth graders were placed somewhat in the upper level of the score span, while the mean for the fifth graders was in the lower level of the score span, and (c) The estimated IQ scores were somewhat below the estimated average of 100 for each group.

(Insert Table 2 about here)

The intercorrelations of need achievement, IQ, and reading achievement are presented in Table 3. The highest correlation

was found between need achievement and reading achievement with the reported correlation coefficients of .76 ($p < .001$) for the fourth graders, .47 ($p < .001$) for the fifth graders, and .48 ($p < .001$) for the sixth graders. The second highest correlation was found between IQ and reading achievement with the reported correlation coefficients of .56 ($p < .001$) for the fourth graders and .41 ($p < .001$) for the sixth graders. There was a considerably lower correlation for the fifth graders (.26, $p < .05$). The correlation between need achievement and IQ was .34 ($p < .01$) for the fourth graders, .46 ($p < .001$) for the fifth graders, and .37 ($p < .001$) for the sixth graders. Hence, one can see that the samples from all three grades indicated higher correlation with n achievement and reading than with IQ and reading.

(Insert Table 3 about here)

Discussion

Need achievement motivation was the major variable under consideration in this study. Need achievement motivation is best defined as a persistent urge for achievement, self-improvement, the fulfillment of an ideal, attaining excellence, doing things better, faster, more efficiently, and finding unique solutions to difficult problems (McClelland, 1961). This urge could represent a desire for success as a lawyer, a football star, movie star, a teacher, or a good parent. In all instances, need achievement motivation represents a craving to grasp on to and succeed in a challenging situation. In some cases, it reflects a person's desire to develop his talents as fully as possible. In other cases, it is based on an intense desire for power, superiority, and distinction.

Need achievement motivation, in many ways, is natural to everyone. At least some need achievement motivation is required for every kind of human achievement. As was indicated in this study, it is specifically pertinent to reading performance. For this reason, children should be encouraged to develop this motive. They should also receive help in fulfilling their ambitions and goals.

In this study, need achievement motivation was found to be correlated with reading achievement. In fact, the correlation between need achievement and reading achievement was found to be stronger than the correlation between IQ and reading achievement. This suggests that need achievement motivation may affect a student's reading performance to a greater degree than his native intelligence. Hence, if a student has a need to learn to read, then he will want to learn to read in order to satisfy that need.

Therefore, teachers who are responsible for teaching reading should try to find something in the student's life style that he could use to help the student to establish a need for learning to read. It is important that the teacher find the student's need rather than the need that the teacher thinks the student should have. Children are different from each other in terms of individual needs and they are most certainly different from adults. Hence, the teacher cannot use his life style as a basis for the student's search for his own needs.

Another concern of this study involved the provision of a diagnostic instrument that the reading specialist and the classroom teacher may find useful as a part of their programs. Appropriate use of diagnostic tools is a major factor in teaching. Reading disabilities may be the results of inadequate use and understanding of various instruments in the classroom. The experimenters are suggesting that if teachers are provided with a number of diagnostic instruments that are simple to administer and interpret, teachers will be better able to teach certain skills and proper behaviors. Therefore, it is suggested that the use of N Achievement Checklist could become a very useful assessment technique and guide for assisting teachers in working with students.

TABLE 1

N Achievement Checklist

Directions: The following is a set of questions. Read each question and decide whether or not the student named above typically exhibits the behavior stated in the question. Indicate your choice by checking yes or no in the appropriate blank.

1. Does this student usually keep at his work until it is done? yes_____ no_____
2. Most of the time, is it easy for this student to recite or talk in class? yes_____ no_____
3. When this student has some free time, does he usually ask you what to do? yes_____ no_____
4. Do you generally have to tell this student to do his work? yes_____ no_____
5. Would this student rather plan his own work than to have someone else plan it for him? yes_____ no_____
6. Does this student like to help his classmates? yes_____ no_____
7. When this student starts a task and it becomes hard, does he often stop trying? yes_____ no_____
8. Do you think this student believes he could do well at almost anything he wants? yes_____ no_____
9. When this student's school work is wrong, does he often give up? yes_____ no_____
10. Is this student doing as well as he could in his school work? yes_____ no_____
11. If this student knows the answer to a question, does he usually raise his hand to volunteer the answer? yes_____ no_____
12. Does this student generally feel badly, if he gets to school late? yes_____ no_____
13. Does this student like to do new things? yes_____ no_____
14. Does this student seem to work because the teacher might punish rather than because he likes to learn? yes_____ no_____
15. Does this student like to do his own work? yes_____ no_____
16. Does this student usually try very hard to finish his homework? yes_____ no_____

17. Does this student often become extremely nervous before test time? yes_____ no_____

18. Does this student often volunteer to do projects? yes_____ no_____

19. Does this student often need to know what grade he made on test or homework before you have had a chance to score it? yes_____ no_____

20. Is it important for this student to seek your approval on his work? yes_____ no_____

TABLE 2

THE MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION OF,

READING ACHIEVEMENT, IQ, AND

NEED ACHIEVEMENT

	Mean	Standard Deviation
4th Graders		
Need Achievement	10.06	6.17
IQ	95.59	14.02
Reading Achievement	3.55	1.03
5th Graders		
Need Achievement	7.09	3.96
IQ	83.94	11.60
Reading Achievement	4.08	1.88
6th Graders		
Need Achievement	11.59	4.66
IQ	89.88	10.51
Reading Achievement	5.57	1.58

TABLE 3

INTERCORRELATION OF READING ACHIEVEMENT

IQ, AND NEED ACHIEVEMENT

	IQ	Reading Achievement
4th Graders		
Need Achievement	.34**	.76***
IQ	---	.56***
Reading Achievement	---	---
5th Graders		
Need Achievement	.46***	.47***
IQ	---	.26*
Reading Achievement	---	---
6th Graders		
Need Achievement	.37**	.48***
IQ	---	.41***
Reading Achievement	---	---

*$p < .05$ **$p < .01$ ***$p < .001$

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